

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 008428

FOR AMBASSADOR WHITE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PA

SUBJECT: ARREST OF CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONISTS
REF: ASUNCION 39

1. MARGARET WILDE, A CONSULTANT ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST), HAS REQUESTED THAT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE BE PASSED TO YOU. THE MESSAGE EXPRESSES CONCERNS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OVER POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE ARRESTS OF THE TRADE UNIONISTS. MRS. WILDE REQUESTED THAT SHE AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH BE PROTECTED AS THE SOURCE OF CONCERN.

2. BEGIN TEXT -

BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE, WE FEEL THAT THE IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL DANGER TO THE YPACARAI DETAINEES IS NOW PAST. HAVING BEEN ARRAIGNED FOR TRIAL AND PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED
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AS POLITICAL PRISONERS, THEY WILL BE RELATIVELY SAFE (ALTHOUGH WE ARE CONCERNED FOR THEM AND THE OTHER PRISONERS IN VIEW OF THE SUMMER WATER SHORTAGE AND RESULTING HEALTH PROBLEMS). THERE ARE, HOWEVER, TWO GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHOSE PERSONAL SAFETY IS IN SERIOUS JEOPARDY AS A RESULT OF THESE ARRESTS.

3. THE FIRST GROUP CONSISTS OF PRISONERS AT EMBOSCADA AND OTHER DETENTION CENTERS, MANY OF WHOM VERY PROBABLY HAVE BEEN OR WILL BE TAKEN BACK TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATIONS FOR RENEWED INTERROGATION DESIGNED TO LINK THEM WITH THE NEW DETAINEES, OR TO BUILD UP A POLICE CASE AGAINST THE LATTER. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE JULY WAVE OF ARRESTS, AND THE FACT THAT THE POLICE ARE NEWLY ALLEGING AN OPM CONNECTION MAKES THE LIKELIHOOD OF REPETITION GREATER. IRONICALLY, THIS PROCEDURE MAY LEAD TO NEW RELEASES WHICH CAN HAVE THE EFFECT OF IMPROVING THE GOVERNMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE; THE INVESTIGATIONS POLICE COMBINE BRUTAL INTERROGATION WITH OFFERS TO FREE CERTAIN PRISONERS IN RETURN FOR DECLARATIONS AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SELECTED FOR TRIAL. WE ASK THE EMBASSY STAFF TO WATCH CLOSELY FOR TRANSFERS TO AND FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATIONS.

4. IN THE SECOND PLACE -- AND WE ASK COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY IN THIS MATTER SO THAT OUR CONCERN MAY NOT BECOME A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY -- WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE DANGER THAT EITHER MASSIVELY (AS IN 1976) OR SELECTIVELY, THE POLICE WILL USE THESE ARRESTS AS A PRETEXT FOR ROUNDING UP OTHER PEASANT LEADERS. SPECIAL ATTENTION SHOULD BE PAID TO THE AREA AROUND CONCEPCION, WHERE THE CATHOLIC BISHOP ANIBAL MARISEVICH HAS CONTINUED TO SUPPORT PEASANT COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES; AND TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

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RURAL PROMOTION WORK OF FRIENDSHIP MISSION. A PROMPT RESPONSE TO THE ARRESTS OF ANY PEASANT FARMERS, OR THEIR DISAPPEARANCE, COULD DISCOURAGE WHAT MAY BE A PLANNED WAVE OF RURAL REPRESSION THAT GOES FOR BEYOND THE YPACARAI MEETING. END TEXT.

5. COMMENT - MRS. WILDE EDITS A PERIODIC NEWSLETTER CALLED "PARAGUAY WATCH" WHICH IS CIRCULATED WITH THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND ABROAD. SHE IS IN FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THE DEPARTMENT AND IS CONSIDERED TO BE WELL INFORMED WITH GOOD CONTACTS IN PARAGUAY.

CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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